

Stanford Report, July 26, 2006



SEARCH

## VIDEOS

Video Archive

## NEWS

University Affairs  
Humanities  
Medical Center  
Sci/Tech  
Social Sciences  
Business  
Teaching/Students  
Staff News  
Cardinal Chronicle

## PEOPLE

In Print & On Air  
Obituaries  
Awards  
On the Move

## EVENTS

Today's Events  
Upcoming Events  
Recreation  
Academic Calendar

## FOR THE RECORD

Faculty Senate  
Board of Trustees  
Speeches  
Crime Statistics  
Ph.D. Orals

## OPINION

Vantage Points  
Letters

## CLASSIFIEDS

Employment  
Housing  
Carpools

## SPORTS

Latest Scores

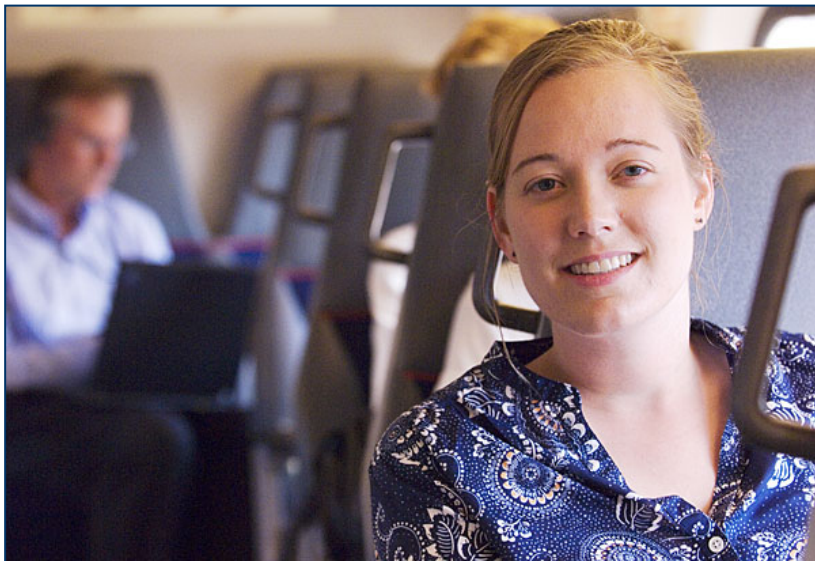
## NEWS SERVICE

Resources  
Press Releases  
@ Stanford  
Subscriptions  
Contact

# The roads not taken: Creative, economical ways of getting to campus abound

BY JON ANN LINDSEY

L.A. Cicero



Cindy Struloeff of Sunnyvale says commuting by Caltrain and Marguerite is more convenient for her than driving.

When the 32,000 or so daily drivers on the Cornhusker Highway in Lincoln, Neb., need to change lanes, they're likely to wait for a break in the traffic and then make their move.

On Central Expressway, which runs from Palo Alto to Santa Clara and handles roughly 110,000 car trips per day, the scene is a little more aggressive. At least that's what Cindy Struloeff found when she moved from Lincoln to Sunnyvale last fall with her husband, John, a Stegner Fellow.

"When people asked me how I liked living in California, I told them I liked it very much, except between the hours of 4 and 6 p.m.," said Struloeff, a social science research assistant in the Department of Radiation Oncology. "I was just amazed, because I live 10 miles away and it took me almost an hour to get home. The sheer amount of cars on the road—it just takes longer to get everywhere."

For several months, she drove to and from campus, usually by herself. Her husband was taking Caltrain to San Francisco once a week and urged her to give it a try. Though she was initially nervous about the logistics—"Not knowing exactly what to do sort of intimidated me," she said—she quickly found the Caltrain-Marguerite transit combination to be simple and much more convenient.

"I catch the train at 7 and I'm in to work by 7:30, which was just impossible before," Struloeff said. "Coming back it's even better. I catch the 5:12 and I'm home by 5:20. It's so much faster."

Struloeff's stress-free train trips inspired her to become one of the 6,030 participants in the Commute Club, Stanford's main vehicle for promoting alternative transportation on campus, either through mass transit, ridesharing, bicycling or walking, or through programs such as Clean Air Cash and free car-rental vouchers for members.

L.A. Cicero



Rana Glasgal commutes to campus on her battery-powered scooter. So far she has logged more than 6,000 miles on her eye-catching two-wheeler.

## Related Information

- [Benefits of Stanford's Commute Club](#)
- [University recognized for alternative-transportation efforts](#)



Besides the money she saves on gas, Struloeff is eligible for up to \$204 a year for not purchasing a campus-parking permit. Her monthly Caltrain pass is gratis under the GO Pass program, which offers free transit to university employees who live off campus and work at least half time, receive regular university benefits and are on campus primarily for employment at the university. Graduate students who live off campus can purchase GO Passes at a subsidized rate of \$60 through the end of 2006.

Stephanie Manning, outreach and transportation demand management coordinator for Parking & Transportation Services, noted that Commute Club membership has grown by more than 1,400 since the 2004-05 academic year.

"Both rising gas prices and the provost's memos to University Cabinet members have helped significantly increase our Commute Club participation, but we've also seen greater environmental awareness in recent months," she said. "People have begun to realize that every trip counts—that even bicycling once a week or utilizing their free Caltrain GO Pass part time can help significantly reduce CO2 emissions."

Palo Alto-resident Rana Glasgal's contribution to cleaner air came in the form of a bright red, battery-powered scooter called an Oxygen Lepton. She charges it every night and zips to campus at 25 mph. So far she's logged 6,000-plus miles on her eye-catching two-wheeler.

Glasgal, associate vice provost for institutional research and decision support, stopped driving four years ago when it started taking her as long to find a parking space and walk to her office as it took her to drive to work.

"I had a lot of frustration about driving, but biking wasn't a good solution for me. There were too many logistical problems," she said. With the scooter, "I can park near my office, and I can come and go at lunchtime without worrying about whether I have a parking space when I get back."

The newest tool for commuters is a Stanford-centric online ride-matching site for carpoolers. Manning said the program, a partnership with 511.org, is an improvement on a previous system in which commuters e-mailed the Parking & Transportation Services for a list of potential carpool partners.

"A lot of people are interested in carpooling, but they're mostly interested in carpooling with Stanford folks," she said. "This is enabling them to be a little bit more in control of their rideshare request."

Stanford's transportation incentives recently earned the university a national designation from the Environmental Protection Agency as one of the best workplaces for commuters. It also received the Gold Prize in the Race to Excellence, awarded to organizations for their outstanding contributions in supporting commuter benefits.

An annual benefits survey by the Society for Human Resource Management found that only 13 percent of more than 2,500 employers surveyed offered transit subsidies to employees. Just 7 percent offered carpooling subsidies.

In Stanford's case, the transit programs serve a dual purpose. While they're a perk for employees, they also are designed to help the university meet the requirements of its General Use Permit (GUP) from Santa Clara County. The cost to Stanford for 2006, Manning said, is about \$900,000 for Caltrain GO Passes and \$250,000 for VTA Eco Passes.

The GUP issued to the university in December 2000 includes a condition that morning and evening commuter traffic during peak hours stay within 1 percent of baseline levels set in 2001.

Parking & Transportation Services numbers show that the drive-alone rate for university employees has dropped to 58 percent in 2005 from 72 percent in 2002. Countywide, 74 percent of commuters drove alone in '05, according to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

Meeting those guidelines means programs and incentives are added often enough that not everyone keeps up with what's available. Manning said that the Guaranteed Ride Home program is one "that people don't realize we have."

If an emergency comes up on a day when Commute Club members have taken alternative transportation, the transportation department will arrange for a taxi or rental car to get them home.

Similarly, those who shy away from transit because they unexpectedly may need a car during the day can use hourly vouchers for free car rentals three times each quarter. With those kinds of safeguards in place, Struloeff and Glasgal say they're happy to have given up all that time behind the wheel.

"It's convenient, quiet, pleasant, and it's actually faster," Glasgal said of her scooter commute.

And for Struloeff, the train takes the edge off the California-sized parking hassles. "There are more cars than spaces everywhere here," she said. "It's totally different from Nebraska."

*Jon Ann Lindsey is a writer in the Office of University Communications.*

